BARFDAE-005-PEAZY

BARFDAY

BAE

(BY) PEAZY

005

WET T-SHIRT CONTEST BUT MAKE IT NOT FUN

I WATCHED AN OLD LADY PUKE INTO A PLATE OF NACHOS AT APPLEBEES WHILE I WAS DRINKING WITH WOMEN I'VE ALWAYS BEEN RELUCTANT TO CALL GIRLFRIENDS, BUT THERE I WAS, ENSNARED AGAIN, BEREFT OF BETTER OPTIONS, TRANSFIXED BY THE OLD BIDDY AND HER ALMOST GRACEFUL, DANCELIKE BUILD-UP TO A FOUNTAINOUS RELEASE OF STOMACH CONTENTS. LACY NUDGED ME.

"I GOT US SHOTS," SHE SAID.

"YEAH, BITCH. PAY ATTENTION," VALERIE COMMANDED.

"I LOVE NACHOS."

"DON'T MAKE ME THINK ABOUT IT," LACY GROANED.

"I'LL TOSS MY COOKIES FOR SURE," VALERIE ADDED.

THESE INSUFFERABLE BITCHES WERE ALL ABOUT THEIR LITTLE *GIRLY THIRTIES* SINGLES CLIQUE. AND I WAS JOINING THEM (INVOLUNTARILY). THE BIG 3-OH-(NO). FUCK. THANK GOD I ALREADY HAD THE KID AND A FAILED RELATIONSHIP (OR TWO OR THREE, WHO'S COUNTING) BEHIND ME. THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME I PUT ON MAKEUP IN YEARS. AND I MEAN MAYBE A YEAR, YEAR-AND-A-HALF REALLY, 'CAUSE PANDEMIC AND SHIT. BUT WHATEVER.

I THOUGHT THEY WERE KIND OF PATHETIC. VALERIE GOT HER FIRST PERIOD AT TWENTY AND DIDN'T LOSE HER VIRGINITY UNTIL SHE WAS A QUARTER CENTURY OLD, AND LACY HAD MONSTROUS TITS THAT SURELY SAGGED SANS BRASSIERE; THEY WERE BOTH CHILDLESS, MANLESS MESSES OF FUCKABLE (THIS DESPITE THEIR ADJACENCE TO FORTY AND SELF-IDENTIFYING AS HETERO VOLCELS, SEEKING OUT NEAR UNCONSCIONABLE PERFECTION IN POTENTIAL SUITORS—DEMANDING IT EVEN—OBVIOUSLY THERE WAS NO LACK OF MEN TRYING THEIR OVERLY EAGER, DESPERATE LITTLE LOVELORNED APPENDAGES WITH THEM, AS MEN WILL FUCK ANYTHING) YET FUCKLESS PROPORTIONS.

THIS SOMETIMES WELL-INTENTIONED (THOUGH THEIR SUBCONSCIOUS MOTIVATIONS, IF THEY EXIST AT ALL BEYOND WHAT IS DESCRIBABLE TO ME (I LOATHE PSYCHOANALYSIS), MAY NOT EVEN BE DEFINABLE IN THAT SENSE) BUT NONETHELESS UNWELCOME CHAOS IN MY LIFE USUALLY MANIFESTED ITSELF IN BEING USED AS BAIT FOR THEIR MAN PARING (THEY CALLED IT FILTERING, BUT MY WORD IS MORE ACCURATELY DESCRIPTIVE) SCHEMES. AND THAT'S ALL IT WAS, REALLY; STEMMING FROM A RESENTMENT OF MEN FOR BEING MEN, I GUESS. PENIS OWNERSHIP, AS FAR AS THEY WERE CONCERNED, WAS SYNONYMOUS WITH BEING AWFUL,

PRIVILEGED, VALUELESS, HUBRISTIC WASTRELS LIVING OFF THE BARREN SOIL, SOMEHOW THRIVING (!), AND MORE, BEING ENABLED AND ENTITLED DUE TO PATRIARCHAL BLAH DI BLAH. MMHMM.

IN THEIR DEFENSE, IN AN ASSORTMENT OF CASES THIS WAS TRUE. BUT INSTEAD OF LIVING UP TO THEIR OWN UNREASONABLY LOFTY AND RIDICULOUS EXPECTATIONS, INSTEAD OF EMBODYING WHAT THEY WANTED TO ATTRACT, EFFECTIVELY VISION-BOARDING THEIR COURTING EXPECTATIONS REALISTICALLY, THEY USED ME—EITHER OUT OF HATRED, JEALOUSY, A ROTTEN SENSE OF HUMOR, OR (PROBABLY MOST DEFINITELY) ALL OF THE ABOVE—TO ENTRAP AND RIDICULE THE WORST OF THE WORST. AND I LET THEM.

ANYWAY, THE BLUE HAIR UPCHUCKING INTO HER NACHOS SENT MY APPETITE TO ABU DHABI OR SOME SHIT (MY MOM HAS A COLLECTION OF THE GLASS *GARFIELD* COFFEE MUGS MCDONALDS USED TO SELL IN THE '80S). WHEN THE SERVER RETURNED, I RESCINDED MY FOOD ORDER AND DOUBLED DOWN ON THE SHOTS, KNOWING I'D PROBABLY JUST GET THAT 25 TACO FOR 20$ DEAL AT *TAQUERIA DE HIJA* IN A FUTILE ATTEMPT AT ACHIEVING SOBRIETY BEFORE DAWN.

BREATH FOREVER BEFOULED BY WHATEVER BACTERIA RESIDED IN HER GUT, VALERIE SAID, "OKAY, BIRTHDAY BITCH, WE HAVE A SURPRISE FOR YOU."

THE FAMILIARITY WITH WHICH SHE CONSTANTLY ADDRESSED ME WAS BILE INDUCING. THE BITTER TASTE OF ANNOYANCE. NOBODY LIKES SURPRISES, ESPECIALLY IF THEY'RE LAME OR PREDICATED ON THE DESIRES OF THE SURPRISER AND NOT THE SURPRISEE.

"I'M GLAD I THOUGHT TWICE ABOUT THE NACHOS."

"OMG, I LOOKED AWAY FOR A REASON," LACY SAID.

"Y'ALL MIGHT AS WELL CLUE ME IN. I REALLY DON'T WANT TO BE SURPRISED."

"TRUST BITCH, DAMN!" THEY SAID IN UNISON, JINXING EACH OTHER INTO FURTHER DROWNING ME IN SHOTS.

"NO, I WON'T TRUST. I'M NOT GONNA COMPLAIN ABOUT YOU PLYING ME WITH BOOZE. I JUST WANT TO KNOW WHAT FOR."

"IT'S YOUR BIRTHDAY BIIIITCH!" VALERIE SLURRED.

"I'M AWARE."

I WISHED THEY WOULD STOP CALLING ME BITCH. NOT THAT SUCH A DESCRIPTIVE IS PATENTLY OFFENSIVE OR UNTRUE, BUT RATHER, THE URBAN PATOIS EMPLOYED IN THE USAGE OF THE WORD MAKES ME THINK OF WOKE COLLEGE YOUTHS (MOST OF THEM NOT BLACK; AS IF BLACK AND URBAN ARE SYNONYMOUS, A PERSONAL FAILING, A RACISM, I SHOULD ADMIT) APPROPRIATING IT TO SOUND COOL WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY HIDING BEHIND THEIR OWN PRESUMPTIVE "WOKENESS" TO CRITIQUE WHAT THEY FIND OBJECTIONABLE IN THOSE DOING THE SAME BUT WITH "LESSER" POLITICS UTTERLY DETACHED FROM THEIR EGALITARIAN BRAND OF POLITICS.

PAINFULLY AWARE OF THE FACT I WAS BEING TOO CHARITABLE, INDEED, TOO HEADY IN QUESTIONING (RATHER SILENTLY, I MIGHT ADD) THEIR MEALYMOUTHED, EMPTY-HEADED ATTEMPTS AT SOMETHING RESEMBLING YET NOT QUITE EMBODYING EGALITARIANISM (THEY PROBABLY COULDN'T DEFINE IT, AND IT ALWAYS ASSUMED THEMSELVES AT THE UNDESERVED BOTTOM OF WHATEVER HIERARCHIES THEY CLAIMED EXISTED; ETERNAL VICTIMHOOD GRANTING THEM CARTE BLANCHE TO PUNCH IN ANY FUCKING DIRECTION), I DECIDED TO SHUT DOWN MY BRAIN AND LET MY FACE MELT INTO A SCULPT-LIKE DEPICTION OF DETACHMENT. IT WAS MY BIRTHDAY, AND I COULD DISSOCIATE IF I WANTED TO.

WHEN I CLOSED MY EYES, I COULD STILL SEE THE WATERFALL OF VOMIT SPRINGING FORTH FROM THE OLD BAG'S DRIED LIPS. JUST AS IN REAL TIME, LIKE MY RUBBERNECKING ANALOGUES, I COULD NOT LOOK AWAY FROM THE DISGUSTING EVENT. THE BACKS OF MY EYELIDS, THEN, FINALLY, FOREVER TAINTED AND UNCLEAN, PROVIDED ME WITH SAID IMAGE ON A LOOP.

THE POOR AGED BROAD NEARLY PROJECTILE PUKED HERSELF ONTO THE FLOOR. AND LACY AND VALERIE, BOTH AT A DEARTH OF INTESTINAL FORTITUDE, AVERTED THEIR JUDGEY, STUPID LITTLE GAZES LIKE THE COWARDS THEY WERE. BITCHES.

ALL THAT TO SAY, SHIT, WAS MY STOMACH TURNING. THE SHOTS OF TEQUILA WERE COMING INTO THEIR OWN, YET MY BRAIN MANAGED TO SWIM AND NOT DROWN DESPITE THE INUNDATING SPIRITS, THE NATURAL FUCKING DISASTER OF IT ALL.

"I CAN'T BELIEVE THE BIRTHDAY BITCH IS STILL UPRIGHT!" LACY SQUEALED.

"WHAT ABOUT THAT ONE OVER THERE?"

"VALERIE... GIRL, HE'S PERFECT!"

"IT WAS LIKE A *FAMILY GUY* BIT," I MUTTERED.

"WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, GIRL?"

"HEY... HEY...," I STARTED AT LACY. "ANYONE EVER TOLD YOU YOUR TITS ARE BIGGER THAN YOUR BRAIN?"

"BITCH GOT DIGS!" VALERIE LAUGHED.

"I WOULDN'T LAUGH. I CAN SMELL YOUR COOCHIE FROM HERE."

"HEY, WE'RE TRYING TO MAKE YOUR SPECIAL DAY FUN."

"YOU TALK ABOUT ME LIKE I CAN'T HEAR AND TO ME LIKE I'M A CHILD, OR WORSE, A DOG. NOT FEELING VERY SPECIAL RIGHT NOW."

"SUCH A CONSTITUTION FOR A SMALL PACKAGE."

"HUH?" I BLURTED.

"YOU'VE HAD A LOT TO DRINK," LACY SAID.

"I'M JUST SURPRISED AT YOUR ELOQUENCE," I SAID.

"WHY? I READ *S.C.U.M.* I'M NOT DUMB," VALERIE PREENED, PLACING HER FAKE NAILED HANDS TO EYE LEVEL FOR PUNCTUATIVE AFFECT.

I LOL'ED ON THE INSIDE. SOLANAS' MAGNUM OPUS WASN'T VIRGINA WOOLF. SO IT WAS OBVIOUS TO ME THIS BITCH WAS DUMB AF AND FEIGNED BLISSFUL UNAWARENESS, BUT LIKE ANY COCKSURE WANNABE, SHE WAS PROUD OF IT. TO TAKE A HISTRIONIC PIECE OF POLEMICAL NONSENSE MASQUERADING AS SATIRE AND ACCEPT IT AS RADICAL TRUTH, AND TO BUILD AN ENTIRE WORLD VIEW OF IT, EVEN IN JEST, SUGGESTED NOT ONLY A BANKRUPTCY OF HISTORICITY, BUT AN EMPTY SPACE WHERE IMAGINATION AND CREATIVITY MIGHT NORMALLY RESIDE. VALERIE WAS AN IDEOLOGICAL GENTRIFIER, SHE DIDN'T BELONG WHERE SHE WAS, BUT SHE SURE AS FUCK WAS GOING TO SAY WHATEVER TO DEFEND HER PRESENSE.

"DON'T KNOW WHY YOU'RE SO HOSTILE," SHE CONTINUED, "I THOUGHT SLUTS LOVED TO FUCK."

"YEAH. WE SURE DO LOVE TO FUCK. IT'S TOP PRIORITY, EVEN. HOW MANY OF THESE GUYS DO I ACTUALLY FUCK?"

"SO IF YOU'RE NOT HAVING FUN, WHY DO YOU DO THIS?" LACY ASKED.

"MAYBE MY DAD DIDN'T LOVE ME ENOUGH."

"RIGHT. DADDY ISSUES. THAT'S PURE MISOGYNY."

“IS IT? BUT IT’S NOT MISOGYNY TO FOIST WEIRDO LOSERS ON YOUR GIRLFRIEND?”

“DIDN’T YOU FUCK THAT ONE GUY? THE ASIAN?”

“BIG DADDY WONG!” VALERIE EJACULATED WITH A LAUGH.

“YEAH, HE WAS SUPER NICE, ACTUALLY. HONEST. JUST WANTED A ONE NIGHT STAND. HE WAS HOT, SO I DIDN’T MIND.”

“DID HE HAVE A SMALL DICK?”

“LACY, WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU SAW ONE?” VALERIE ASKED.

GOOD, NOW THEY WERE GOING TO GO AT EACH OTHER.

“HIS DICK WAS FINE. WILD THAT YOU WOULD EMBRACE STEREOTYPES BASED ON PORN, CONSIDERING YOU THINK PORN IS EVIL.”

“PORN IS EVIL, GIRL.”

“YEAH,” LACY SAID, “LIKE, WHY WOULD I WANT TO BE A VESSEL FOR SOME SCROTE’S LAME ASS FANTASY?”

“NEXT TIME SOME GUY WANTS TO FINISH ON YOUR FACE, ASK HIM IF HE WOULD LIKE PERIOD BLOOD SMEARED ALL OVER HIM. I BET HE THINKS THAT’S GROSS,” VALERIE ADDED.

“MY TITS ARE BIG, BUT MAKING THEM THE BUNS FOR YOUR LITTLE VIENNA SAUSAGE SOUNDS BORING AS HELL. DOES NOTHING FOR ME.”

“I LIKE BEING CHOKED AND SLAPPED AND MY HAIR PULLED, ‘CAUSE NOTHING SAYS LOVIN’ LIKE A MAN WHO OBVIOUSLY HATES YOU AND USES IT AS A FOCAL POINT FOR GETTING OFF ‘CAUSE HE’S SO ED’D THERE’S NO OTHER WAY.”

“RIGHT?”

“RIGHT!”

MY HEAD WAS FLOATING BY THIS POINT, AND WHILE I COULD UNDERSTAND THEIR POINTS, I STILL FOUND THEM INSUFFERABLE; STUPIDLY UNWILLING TO ADDRESS THEIR OWN FAILINGS. TO BE SURE, THESE WERE NOT STRAW MEN THEY SPOKE OF, BUT THESE WERE ALSO NOT THE RULE. AND I WAS NO BETTER (OR WORSE), ALLOWING MYSELF TO PLAY THEIR PAWN. THE BILE WAS GATHERING AT THE BASE OF MY ESOPHAGUS SOMEWHERE IN MY BOSOM.

“YES, LACY, DAHHHHLING, YOUR TITS ARE RATHER MASSIVE,” I HICCUPPED. “HEAVY IS THE BACK WHICH KEEPS YOU UPRIGHT. AND VALERIE, FOR SURE, FOR SURE, THE ROUGH STUFF IS A BRIDGE TOO FAR, BUT THAT ASIAN GUY, MAN WHAT A SMALL REPRESENTATION OF MANHOOD, JUST AS PROPHESIED ”

"I THINK BIRTHDAY BITCH HAS HAD ONE TOO MANY!"

BOTH BITCHES IN UNISON, "FUCK. YES. WE. ARE. GO!"

THIS WAS A TESTAMENT TO WHY I DESPISED SO-CALLED "RADICAL" FEMINISM. THE ESSENTIALIST FRAMEWORK OF "SHARED OPPRESSION" BOUND BY "LIVED EXPERIENCE" LENDING ACTION TO SOME KIND OF SISTERHOOD THROUGH ATTRITION MEANT THAT THE CONTEXT OF THEIR DEPLORABLE BEHAVIOR SOMEHOW VALIDATED IT, OR, MORE APPROPRIATELY, SHED LIGHT ON A RECLAMATION PROJECT NO PENIS BEARER COULD POSSIBLY UNDERSTAND OR REPLICATE (RESPECTFULLY, FAITHFULLY). IT WAS "CHICKS ROCK" WITHOUT THE CHARM OR JUVENILIC INNOCENCE THAT USUALLY WENT HAND-IN-HAND WITH THE DUDES' ANALOGUE.

"I'M NOT THAT DRUNK," I INSISTED.

"THEN LOOKS LIKE YOU NEED MORE SHOTS, GIRLY," VALERIE SAID, TURNING SERIOUS.

"YEAH BITCH, WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER. NEVER THOUGHT BIRTHDAY GIRL WOULD BECOME SUCH A PRUDE."

"WELL, I CAN TASTE THE BILE IN MY THROAT RISING. THE ONLY THING I'M FIT TO SEDUCE IS A GLASS OF WATER," I QUIPPED FLATLY.

THEY LAUGHED TOGETHER. AT ME. THEN BOTH LEANED IN. THEY SAID NOTHING. I COULD NOT PULL MY EYES AWAY FROM THEIRS. IN PUBLIC, I FELT COMPLETELY ALONE WITH THEM.

"YOU NEED TO APPRECIATE THIS."

"YEAH, FOR REAL," VALERIE SAID.

"SHUT UP, LET ME DEAL WITH HER," LACY SAID, NEVER REMOVING HER GAZE FROM MINE. "WE'RE NOT ASKING YOU. DEVIATION WILL NOT BE TOLERATED, PRINCESS."

"UH... OKAY..."

VALERIE WAVED HER HAND, AND ANOTHER TRAY OF DRINKS WAS DROPPED IN FRONT OF THEM.

"PERKS," LACY SAID, "OF HAVING THESE GINORMOUS TITS. BARTENDER WANTS TO FUCK ME, BUT HE'S AN ALCOHOLIC, COKE ADDLED LOSER, DIVORCED FATHER OF FOUR. NO WAY."

"BUT LISTEN," VALERIE INTERRUPTED, "YOU KNOW THAT EPISODE OF *IT'S ALWAYS SUNNY IN PHILADELPHIA* WHERE DENNIS IS TRYING TO FIND A SUITABLE MATE FOR DEE? WELL, THINK OF THIS AS SOMETHING LIKE THAT. WE'RE YOUR DENNIS, SWEET DEE."

EXCEPT I DIDN'T KNOW THAT EPISODE BECAUSE I STOPPED HAVING TO WATCH THAT STUPID SHOW AFTER I CUT LOOSE MY BABY DADDY. LACY WENT ON TO CRITIQUE THE SHOW AS A "VERITABLE BUFFET" OF "LOW VALUE MEN," AND HOW THAT WAS THE BEAUTY OF IT.

"I WOULDN'T KNOW."

"ANYWAYS, WE HAVE A SELECT FOR YOU, BITCH."

"YEAH, HIS NAME'S AUSTIN..."

"LIKE THE CITY..."

"LACY, PLEASE BITCH, YOU'RE KILLING ME. ANYWAYS, HE'S AUSTIN, HE'S 5'7", 200 LBS AND RUNS A FOOD TRUCK."

"I THINK I SEE HIM!"

THEY CHEERED ME ON AS I KNOCKED BACK FIVE SUCCESSIVE SHOTS. I DIDN'T EVEN STARTLE WHEN I FELT TWO HANDS FIRMLY GRAB MY SHOULDERS. AUSTIN'S LARGE FRAME SETTLED BESIDE ME. WHEN I MET EYES WITH HIM, HE SMILED. HIS TEETH WERE TOBACCO STAINED AND CROOKED. HE SMELLED LIKE FRENCH FRIES AND SWEAT, MOSTLY.

"SO, TACO TRUCK?"

"AUSTIN, THIS IS RACHEL, THE BIRTHDAY BITCH! WE CALL HER 'RACH,' BUT YOU CAN CALL HER EASY," LACY PURRED.

"BURGERS," AUSTIN SAID. "HAPPY BIRTHDAY."

"YOU GONNA ORDER HER SOME BIRTHDAY SHOTS?"

"SURE."

"I GUESS I JUST REALLY WANT A TACO," I SAID. "I WAS GOING TO GET NACHOS, BUT THEN I SAW THIS HIDEOUSLY OLD WOMAN VOMIT INTO HERS AND IT PUT ME OFF."

"JESUS, ENOUGH ABOUT THAT, BITCH! YOU'RE GONNA MAKE ME SICK."

"HEY AUSTIN," I SAID, "IF YOU GET A FAINT WHIFF OF COOCHIE, IT AIN'T ME. VALERIE'S ON THE RAG."

VALERIE OJ'ED ME WITH HER EYES, AND I BURST INTO A CACKLE.

"YOU'LL HAVE TO EXCUSE ME, AUSTIN, MY FRIENDS ARE TRYING TO SET YOU UP FOR DISAPPOINTMENT. SEE, I'M ACTUALLY ASEXUAL, AND AS SUCH, I WON'T BE ABLE TO SERVICE YOU TONIGHT IN ANY FORM OR FASHION."

"I'M GOOD WITH THAT," HE LAUGHED. "TELL ME ABOUT THE OLD LADY VOMITING."

"FOR REAL?" LACY ASKED.

"IF Y'ALL DO THAT, I'M LEAVING," VALERIE SAID.

AUSTIN LOOKED AT THEM. THEY WERE DOING THAT THING WE DO WHEN WE WANT TO CONTROL BOYS, BUT LIKE, THAT SHIT ONLY WORKS IF THEY KNOW THEY'VE SOMETHING TO NOT GAIN OR TO LOSE. THEY LACKED LEVERAGE. AND HE KNEW THAT.

"I'M CURIOUS," HE SAID.

"GREAT! SO LIKE, THE PLATE WAS STEAMING HOT, AND HER EYES WERE JUST EATING IT ALL UP, RIGHT? BUT THEN SUDDENLY SHE MAKES THIS FACE, ALMOST LIKE A BABY SHITTING ITSELF, VIBING TO MUSIC THAT AIN'T BEING PLAYED, AND THEN..."

"DON'T YOU DARE!"

"STOP STOP STOP!"

"THIS FROTH, MAN. I SWEAR, IT STARTED AS A SEEP DOWN HER CHIN, AND THEN FLOWED! OUT OF HER NOSE, TOO! RIGHT INTO THE PLATE! THEN IT WAS LIKE A WATERFALL, JUST SPEWING!"

"UGH!"

"SO GROSS!"

"WAIT," AUSTIN SAYS, "I DO SMELL SOMETHING..." THEN HE STARTS HEAVING LIKE A CAT UNTIL FINALLY PUKING INTO THE EMPTY SHOT GLASSES IN FRONT OF US.

"DISGUSTING!" LACY SHOUTS. THEN VALERIE JOINS THE FUN, VOMITING ALL OVER LACY, WHO THEN VOMITS ON VALERIE, WHICH BEGINS A VOMIT VOLLEY BETWEEN THE THREE OF THEM. IT BROUGHT WHOLE NEW MEANING TO THE CONCEPT OF A WET T-SHIRT CONTEST. CHUNKS WERE FLYING EVERYWHERE AND THE WORLD WAS SPINNING. I TRIED TO GET UP BUT AUSTIN GRABBED ME AND PUKED INTO MY LAP, AND THEN I COULDN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE AND BURPED THE CONTENTS OF MY STOMACH INTO HIS GREASY, SMELLY HAIR.

IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE WE WERE ALL ESCORTED OUT OF THE RESTAURANT. AUSTIN KEPT TRYING TO INSIST HE'D ALREADY PAID FOR BIRTHDAY SHOTS AND THE LADIES WERE CRYING. I COULDN'T STOP LAUGHING. BUT AS I MADE MY WAY TO THE CAB, I VOMITED SOME

MORE. I WAS LEAVING A TRAIL FROM THE SIDEWALK TO THE OPEN CAB DOOR. I HEARD SIRENS AS THE DRIVER YELLED AT ME.

"IT'S MY BARF DAY AND I'M FUCKIN' SICK, DUDE!"

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